

Think safety first and wear a harness whenever utilizing a tree stand.

Up a Tree Without a Harness

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We've all had those sudden moments of hindsight, as in, "Boy, I really should have..." Or, "You know, I would have—if only I had known."

For deer hunters who are just about to hit the ground after falling from a tree, such insights are a little late to prevent the accident.

With deer hunting season just around the corner, saving yourself—in advance—makes now the sensible time to be thinking about what can be done to prevent potentially deadly accidents with tree stands. Wearing a proper safety device is recommended. Commonly called a safety harness, a.k.a. a full-body harness, or a fall-arrest system, or a tree stand harness—whatever you call it, you should be wearing one.

Hunters tend to be proactive in most hunting procedures, whether it's sight-



ing in our equipment, scouting areas, washing our hunting clothes with no-scent soap, checking our gear multiple times.... so why do so many hunters choose not to plan for that big "what if?"

No one wants to fall, or likes the thought of falling, but some hunters continue to not wear the proper safety equipment. Safety harnesses are worn in case you need them, kind of like taking your field-dressing gear with you, just in case you get a deer. The only difference is, we plan on getting a deer, but we don't want to think about falling from our stand.

In Illinois, the 2009 season had 22 reported hunting incidents, with 14 being falls from tree stands. That is over

Always use a haul-line to raise and lower your equipment after you are attached to the tree.

half of the incidents and in one fall the hunter died. Six out of the eight hunting fatalities in the 2008 season were reported falls from tree stands, ladder stands and hang-ons. When hunting from a tree stand, falls can occur anytime after leaving the ground causing injury or death.

You need to give some serious thought to the consequences of surviving a fall: broken legs, arms, neck or back, the potential for multiple operations and years of therapy. Or being paralyzed for



Being attached to the tree with a harness at all times can significantly reduce or eliminate elevated hunting incidents.

life. And then there is the question of who will take care of you and how will you will provide for your family.

Today's safety harnesses are easy to use and hunter-friendly, providing reason enough for wearing one. Manufacturers have a shared goal: keeping you

TMA

The Treestand Manufacturers Association is a non-profit corporation that devotes its resources to tree stand safety. Its mission is to improve tree stand safety by education in the proper use of tree stands, the development of tree stand manufacturing standards, manufacturing quality control and the promotion of mandatory use of a full-body harness.

Tree stand manufacturers meeting TMA standards must provide a TMA-certified full-body harness system that meets current standards with every tree stand purchased.

TMA member companies and products have undergone a rigorous testing procedure at an independent engineering facility.

For more safety tips and information visit, www.tmastands.com.

Treestand safety tips

- Use a safety harness from the moment you leave the ground until you are safely back down, including those times when you are hanging and removing climbing devices and tree stands.
- Remember the three points of contact rule: Have three points of contact on your climbing device(s) at all times, two hands/one foot or one hand/two feet. Keep a solid hand grip at all times.
- Do not use the stand platform as your last step up, but rather step down on your platform. Most tree stand falls happen when the hunter is moving from a climbing device to the stand platform. Climbing devices should be set past the stand platform by at least the hunter's height to permit stepping down onto the platform.
- Except for adjusting side to side or standing up, your safety tether should have no slack in it when you are seated on your stand. If you should fall you will not fall past your stand platform, making a recovery back to your stand easier.
- Use a haul line or rope to raise and lower your equipment. Never carry your equipment by hand or on your back as the additional weight can pull you away from the tree.
- Purchase equipment that meets TMA standards and read and follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Purchase a safety system that is comfortable as you're more likely to use it.

safe while you deer hunt from an elevated or raised position.

There are no winners in the argument about the safest height to hunt from because there is no safe height to fall from. You should be attached to the tree from the minute you leave the ground until you are safely back down. It's that simple. When using a climbing stand, your tree tether should be attached and slid up and down the trunk. If using climbing sticks or ladders, or individual climbing steps or a ladder stand, a lineman's style belt or lifeline system should be used.

Harnesses need not be expensive. Find one you are comfortable with and wear it. Never use unsafe single belts and chest harnesses. These have been offered for sale since 2004, placing them past 5 years old and expired. Studies have shown that these devices turn hunters up-side down and can cause a hunter to go unconscious in a short amount of time.

Safety harness devices are a necessity for tree stand hunters. Take some time this season to familiarize yourself with

the device of your choice, along with some basic tree stand safety procedures.

And then use them. Because 15 feet above the ground, in the dark, is no place to be figuring out how your safety equipment works.



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When seated, your tether strap should have no slack and allow only side-to-side motion or standing up.